

WHAT IS BABYLON ?

When we read through Paul's writings we recognise his deep love and care for the churches he raised up. His deep concern was that they could be drawn back into the world God had called them out of, and become corrupted by false teaching within the church once He was absent.

Let's look at the pattern Satan has used down the ages to corrupt and pollute the people of God.

We can see it in the Corinthian church. Paul had raised up this church under much opposition. Acts 18:4-7. 4 'And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *is* the Christ. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain *man* named Justus, *one* who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.'

He continued to teach, but fearfully, 1Corinthians 2:3. ' I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.' God intervened to encourage him, Acts 18:9-11, ' Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.'

Over the years Paul remained anxious for the church and visited and wrote his epistles to it. We can see why he was worried in 2 Cor 11:2-4. 'For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!'

False teachers had entered in, rejecting the truth and replacing it with another gospel.

Who were they ? v13-15. 'For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.'

What instructions did Paul give to those now subject to the influence of these apostles of darkness? 2Cor 6:14-16. 'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

- Don't remain in fellowship within a church that looks to such a man, or men, rather than Jesus Christ and His word. Why? Because pollution placed their future at risk v 16-17. ' And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among *them*. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

They would no longer be the chaste virgins God requires.

He was right though. God's word repeatedly tells us not to abide with what the Bible calls Babylon. Why? Because we will become polluted by it no matter how hard we resist it, and we will then suffer it's fate, and none of us want to suffer that fate.

Let's look at that fate in Rev 17 and 18.

In chapter 17 we see a description of a great false church v1. 'Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,' This great world-wide church patterned itself after the government of Imperial Rome in the 5th century AD with one man at the top deciding what it's members must believe, including many doctrines straight from Babylon. It's power and control has influenced and dominated kings and nations v2. "with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

She is decked in purple and scarlet, full of riches v3. ' So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.'

She is the mother of many false churches which came out from her v5. 'And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.'

Remember Babylon is a system that places a man, or men as the head of the church, instead of Jesus Christ. This is idolatry, or spiritual adultery in God's eyes which is why the 144,000 who make it into God's family are called virgins, Rev 14:4. 'These are the ones who were not defiled with women, [false churches] for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.'

By participating in such a system, church members place themselves in Babylon, in a de facto manner worshipping the image of the Beast, which is the Roman Empire in it's various forms, right up to the European Union.

This whore has killed many saints, Rev 17v6 'I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.'

She will associate with a great political power soon to emerge v7. 'But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.'

That power will end up fighting the returned Christ v12-14. "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful."

Those who worship the image or take it's mark suffer a terrible fate. Rev 14:8-11. 'And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

In chapter 18 we see a different Babylon, but the same system. This Babylon is a great trading nation with trade agreements with many nations v 9-13. "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; "and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.'

But this nation is destroyed in one hour ! v17-18 'For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance "and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'

It's greatest city utterly disappears, apparently consumed by the waves v21. 'Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw *it* into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.'

This nation epitomises everything that is bad about the Babylonish system, which has actually been responsible for all wars, and even the martyrdom of the saints, v24. "And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

So, what is the common denominator between a great church and a great trading nation, which is so hated by God that he destroys both? To find that we must go back to the origin of Babylon about 4000 years ago. Genesis 10:8-11. 'Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.'" From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth and Calah,'

Cush had a son who was physically and mentally gifted. His name meant 'We shall rebel' . He became a powerful hunter who found he could dominate others by his strength. So, from being a leader of men, he became a ruler of men, and then elevated himself to kingship by gathering men together into the first city, Babylon. From there he extended his kingdom to Assyria, and from there a colony was established in Egypt where he was known as Horus, the hawk headed god. All the Pharaohs pictured themselves with a hawk on their shoulder to show their descent from him. He became the father of false religions.

So Babylon was the origin of power, control and dominion -rulership of men over others. This was never what God had intended, as can be seen from the example of the one nation that escaped this system, and was founded directly by God – the nation of Israel. Exodus 20:2-3. "I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. "You shall have no other gods before Me.'

Israel was to be ruled by God and His laws. Those laws were expounded by the Priests, Aaron's sons Ex 28:1, "Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest.'

Aaron *and* Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, who also passed on God's instructions For example, Judges 1:2. 'And the LORD said, "Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.'" From time to time God raised up Judges to deliver Israel from the effects of their sin Judges 3:7-9. 'So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs. Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of

Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years. When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.'

This theocracy – the rule of a nation by God, unfortunately did not last.

At the time of Samuel, Israel requested a king. 1Samuel 8:5-7. 'and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.'

God warned them that there would be natural penalties, v10-18. 'So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint *them* for his own chariots and *to be* his horsemen, and *some* will run before his chariots. "He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, *will set some* to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and *some* to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. "He will take your daughters *to be* perfumers, cooks, and bakers. "And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants. "He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. "And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put *them* to his work. "He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants." And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.'

Since then there have been many other forms of government, but the same penalties still apply, and even the best of these alternatives – democracy – still results in political elites which do not truly serve the people. Instead they take to themselves power, prestige, control, wealth and personal advantage, all of these the symptoms of a Babylonish system, the opposite of what God wanted.

So what did God really want? How did people live under His Theocracy in Israel, before they chose to replace God with a King? Micah 4:4. 'But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make *them* afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.'

Essentially, Israel was an agricultural economy with the people dwelling in small towns and villages, with priests and judges.

Trade and barter took place locally. Many homes had small craft shops attached but trade also took place at the village gate. 2 Kings 7:18. 'So it happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two seahs of barley for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, shall be *sold* tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria."

Women also produced textiles and clothing at home, Proverbs 31:19,24. 'She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle.' 'She makes linen garments and sells *them*, And supplies sashes for the merchants.'

Because the food and other needed goods were locally produced, they had an agreed recognised value according to the amount of effort that went into their production.

A leather worker for example, might take a hide from a farmer and make his family shoes in exchange for several measures of barley. A potter might exchange his work for so much honey or

fruit . Excess crops would be sold to provide money for more distantly obtained materials or luxury items.

Yes, the more highly talented and skilled would become wealthier than a mere labourer, but even the labourer had his God given land that could provide for his family. The system was fair and there could be little oppression of one person or group by another, which God hates. Isaiah 5:7. 'For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry *for help.*'

God was Israel's only ruler before they requested a king.

This is the society we will see again in God's Kingdom.

So we know what God looks for in a nation. What about in the church?

How should we recognise the true church, apart from it's obedience to the word of God? John 13:34-35. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

How did Christ display love? – By His ultimate service to us. We can recognise the true church by the spirit of service – the exact opposite to the spirit of Babylon, which is about power and rulership where men usurp God's authority. Matthew 20:25-27. 'But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—'

Any church which is ruled by men at the top defies the word of God and as a consequence will lack the Spirit of God, which automatically leads to aposty. That is why God's people are warned not to remain in such an organisation. Despite their best efforts, they will slowly but surely be led astray, and gradually become polluted, until their ultimate error becomes the worship of the image of the beast. cf Rev 20:4. 'And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.'

So, the culmination of the religious Babylon will be found in the combination of the great false church and the growing union of European states, Rev 17:3,12. 'So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.'

These states give their support to the Beast for 42 lunar months Rev 13:5. or 1260 days.

'And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.'

At that time the Beast kills the two witnesses Rev 11:3,7, "And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.'

In this he is supported by the whore in claiming that he is god. 2Thess 2:4. 'who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.'

Three days later they are proved to be liars, Rev 11:8-11. ' And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.'

The ten nations then turn against the False church and destroy it. Rev 17:16. 'And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.' Remember though it is the Babylonish system that God hates!

The other Babylon

The end of the great trading nation Babylon comes long before this, while the world is still functioning as normal. Rev 18:17-18. 'For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance "and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What *is* like this great city?'

This cannot be said of the last 3½ years before Jesus Christ returns. Cf Revelation 8:8 'Then the second angel sounded: And *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.' During that time, the Great Tribulation, the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth in the form of the seventh seal, which consists of seven trumpet plagues. We see this period mentioned in Revelation 14:19 'So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.' A careful reading of this chapter will show that this is the work of the fifth angel mentioned in the chapter. The other four angels cover the previous six seals.

The nation Babylon falls after the first angel makes sure all the world hears the true gospel, Revelation 14:6-8 'Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

The Bible indicates the first six seals also last 3½ years and the first seal is that inspired preaching of the gospel, so Babylon falls next and then war, famine and disease follow, as the second, third and fourth seals.

So, which nation today is the culmination of the PHYSICAL Babylon ? Which great and powerful trading nation today seeks to dominate other nations for it's own advantage? Which nation exerts its power to control other nations by war which brings about the co-lateral death of thousands of innocents?

But what about terrorism? What about 9/11? Every nation has the right to self defense. There was a direct proven link between 9/11 and Afghanistan, and there could be no excuse for the attack on

the twin towers. Iraq, however seems to have been no real threat to America or Britain though, which throws Bush's motives open to doubt. As for Tony Blair - his motives are also in doubt when we see his double standards on the IRA terrorists, who still get away with robbery, murder and oppression apparently with his toleration.

So the real problem with both leaders is that they have no consistent standards except for being out for No. 1, just like Nimrod back at the start!

To continue, which nation plunders the resources of many others to support its extravagant way of life? Which nation is lead by millionaires who greatly profit from both war and reconstruction?

Which nation is heavily influenced by powerful corporations that help elect its leaders?

Which nation`s powerful corporations reach into most other nations to take advantage of cheap sweatshop labour for commercial advantage, later deserting those workers for cheaper labour elsewhere?

Sadly, these Babylonish characteristics are most evident in America and Britain, the very nations who should be God's example to the world, because God originally chose Israel as His model nation.

It is for this reason that God will bring them down. The fall of America will bring about world war, when the world's policeman is suddenly removed. The rest of Israel will be overcome and taken into captivity, as a result.

So, what does it mean when we read Revelation 18:4 ' And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" Can we remove ourselves from physical Babylon? No. Because Babylon is found throughout all Israel, (the descendents of the twelve tribes scattered abroad) though it finds it's epitomization in America. There is nowhere we can go to escape the fall of Babylon. But we can come out of her by not supporting her sins. We can learn not to believe what our leaders say when they can't always be trusted. We can stay out of politics, and involvement in unethical investments in greedy and damaging corporations which care for nothing but their gain. We can learn from our mistakes. It is so easy to be caught up in false patriotism based partly on deception, such as we saw before the invasion of Iraq. It is much better for nations to sort out their own problems - to concentrate on overcoming their own faults and weaknesses to achieve a fair, just and equitable society rather than export their problems to foreign nations by commercial exploitation and military intervention for their own advantage. A UN intervention can avoid this to some extent if intervention is required.

We personally may not be able to cause our leaders to change their ways, but we can speak out against the oppression that is the result of these evils. We can warn people about being part of Babylon.

If we will do that, and separate ourselves from spiritual Babylon too, when the time of trouble comes God has promised us salvation Psalm 91:3-11

'Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler

And from the perilous pestilence.

He shall cover you with His feathers,

And under His wings you shall take refuge;

His truth *shall be your* shield and buckler.

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,

Nor of the arrow *that* flies by day,

Nor of the pestilence *that* walks in darkness,

Nor of the destruction *that* lays waste at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side,

And ten thousand at your right hand;

*But it shall not come near you.
Only with your eyes shall you look,
And see the reward of the wicked.
Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place,
No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.'*

Let us thank God that he has opened our eyes to what is meant by Babylon. Few even in God's church fully understand this subject, but now that we know we can pass this vital information on so that people can beware of the systems that God calls Babylon. Lets remember God's message - "Come out of her, my people" !